

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 2818

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

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SUBJECT: TACK COMMENTS ON NEGOTIATIONS

SUMMARY: JUAN TACK HAS EXPRESSED TO US HIS VIEW THAT MUCH WAS ACCOMPLISHED IN THE NEGOTIATIONS TO DATE AND THAT HE ANTICIPATES THE NEGOTIATIONS WILL CONTINUE SMOOTHLY UNDER HIS SUCCESSOR. HE ALSO SAID HE WOULD SUPPORT TREATY THAT IS NEGOTIATED. HE LAMENTED PAST DISCLOSURES OF NEGOTIATING DETAILS AND STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF NOT LEAKING FUTURE PROGRESS TO THE PANAMANIAN PUBLIC, THEREBY DIMINISHING OVERALL POSITIVE IMPACT OF FINAL TREATY DOCUMENT. FOR MANAGING THINGS DURING NEXT FEW MONTHS, IT WOULD SUFFICE IF PUBLIC KNOWS THAT NEGOTIATIONS ARE CONTINUING AND SOME PROGRESS IS BEING MADE. TACK HAS ABOUT DECIDED TO ACCEPT AMBASSADORSHIP IN GENEVA. END SUMMARY

1. EX-FOREIGN MINISTER JUAN ANTONION TACK, DURING LUNCHEON MEETING WITH POL COUNSELOR APRIL 20, SAID HE WOULD FULLY AND PUBLICLY SUPPORT RATIFICATION BY PANAMA OF "ANY" TREATY THAT OUR TWO GOVERNMENTS WOULD AGREE UPON WITHIN THE PARAMETERS ALREADY ESTABLISHED. HE ALSO EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT AGREEMENT WOULD BE REACHED, SINCE BOTH
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GOVERNMENTS UNDERSTOOD THAT THEIR INTERESTS WOULD BE

SERVED BY A "GOOD" TREATY. THE SOURCES OF OPPOSITION IN PANAMA TO SUCH A TREATY WOULD CONTINUE TO BE THE RADICAL LEFT AND THOSE INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS ON THE RIGHT WHO REMAINED IMPLACABLY OPPOSED TO THE REVOLUTION, BUT, HE JUDGED, 60 PERCENT OF THE PANAMANIAN WOULD ACCEPT THE COMPROMISES THAT GOP HAS MADE IN THE NEGOTIATIONS. HE FELT PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE ON TWO REMAINING MAJOR ISSUES--LANDS AND WATERS AND DURATION--AND ONCE THESE WERE RESOLVED SATISFACTORILY, RESOLUTION OF THE OTHER ISSUES WOULD FOLLOW.

2. TACK LAMENTED THE FACT THAT THE CONCEPTUAL AGREEMENTS ON JURISDICTION HAD BEEN RELEASED LAST YEAR. HAD THE NEWS OF THE 3-YEAR TRANSITION PERIOD FOR JURISDICTION BEEN WITHHELD UNTIL THE GENERAL TERMS OF THE FULL TREATY COULD BE ANNOUNCED, THE OVERALL IMPACT WOULD HAVE BEEN STRONGER, AND IT WOULD HAVE BEEN EASIER TO SECURE APPROVAL OF THE TREATY IN PANAMA. TACK SAID THAT, HENCEFORTH, PENDING FINAL AGREEMENT, THE TWO SIDES SHOULD RELEASE ONLY ENOUGH INFORMATION TO ALLOW THE PUBLIC TO KNOW THAT NEGOTIATIONS ARE CONTINUING AND SOME PROGRESS IS BEING MADE. ANY DRAMATIC NEWS OF BREAKTHROUGHS SHOULD BE WITHHELD FOR MAXIMUM EFFECT AT THE TIME THE GENERAL TERMS OF THE TREATY ARE MADE PUBLIC.

3. TACK ANTICIPATED THAT THERE WOULD BE NO OTHER CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP OF PANAMA'S NEGOTIATING TEAM AT THIS TIME AND THAT THE U.S. COULD BE ASSURED THAT HIS DEPARTURE WOULD NOT AFFECT PANAMA'S POSITIONS IN THE NEGOTIATIONS. WITHIN THE NEXT FEW DAYS HE WOULD BRIEF HIS SUCCESSOR AQUILINO BOYD CONCERNING THE PROCEDURES AND BACKGROUND OF THE NEGOTIATIONS.

4. AT ONE POINT IN THE CONVERSATION, TACK VOLUNTEERED THAT HE HAD NO POLITICAL AMBITIONS, NOR HAD HE PREVIOUSLY ENTERTAINED SUCH THOUGHTS.

5. WELL-TANNED AND RELAXED, TACK HAD JUST RETURNED FROM A WEEK ON THE PACIFIC SIDE BEACHES WITH HIS FAMILY.
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HIS RESIGNATION, HE SAID, HAD BEEN A "STRICTLY PERSONAL" MATTER. HE MENTIONED WITH OBVIOUS SATISFACTION THAT THE NEGOTIATIONS HAD PROGRESSED WELL DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS. HE WOULD ALWAYS REMEMBER WITH PLEASURE THE EXCELLENT RELATIONSHIPS HE HAS ENJOYED WITH AMBASSADOR BUNKER, MOREY BELL, AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE U.S. NEGOTIATING TEAM. DURING THEIR NEXT VISIT TO CONTADORA HE HOPED TO VISIT THEM TO PAY HIS RESPECTS

PERSONALLY AND WISH THEM GOOD LUCK.

6. WHEN ASKED OF HIS PLANS, TACK REPLIED HE PROBABLY WOULD ACCEPT THE POST IN GENEVA OF AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS. HE WAS NEGOTIATING WITH HIS GOVERNMENT, HE SAID, TO OBTAIN SUFFICIENT LIVING ALLOWANCE TO ENABLE HIM TO MEET THE HIGH COST OF LIVING, PARTICULARLY HOUSING, IN GENEVA. HE TENTATIVELY PLANS TO TRAVEL TO GENEVA IN LATE MAY, STOPPING OVER IN NEW YORK FOR A FEW DAYS TO SHOP FOR CLOTHES.

7. COMMENT: IF, AS SOME OF HIS ENEMIES HAVE SAID, TACK IS AN EMBITTERED MAN, HE COVERED THIS UP EXTREMELY WELL. HE SEEMED IN GOOD SPIRITS, WAS VERY CORDIAL AND SPOKE WITH FEELING OF HIS FRIENDSHIP AND RESPECT FOR THE U.S. NEGOTIATORS.
JORDEN

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